

**AMERICAN FOOTBALL IN MEXICO: FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS
OF TEAMS WITHIN THE NATIONAL COLLEGE FOOTBALL
ORGANIZATION, ORGANIZACION NACIONAL ESTUDIANTEL DE FUTBOL
AMERICANO (ONEFA)**

A Thesis

by

GABRIELA DEYANIRA MARTINEZ GARCIA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2007

Major Subject: Kinesiology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee, Michael Sagas
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ABSTRACT

American Football in Mexico: Factors Influencing Success of Teams Within the National College Football Organization, Organizacion Nacional Estudiantil de Futbol Americano (ONEFA). (August 2007)

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This study investigates the factors or determinants that influence success of teams within the Big 12 Conference of the National College Football Organization in Mexico. The findings of such a study were perceived to be useful to other football teams in Mexico, enabling them to implement the strategies and practices of the teams considered the most successful.

The participants in this study included head coaches and players of teams within the Big 12 Conference in Mexico. Two questionnaires containing open-ended questions were addressed to coaches and players in telephone interviews. The data acquired was first transcribed in its original language [Spanish], and then translated to English. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data.

The results indicated that several factors- themes, emerged from the interviews, and they were organized into the input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness (Chelladurai, 2005). The participants considered these factors to be influential for the success of football teams within the Big 12 Conference. Human

resources represented the most determinant factor in the input model. The throughput model showed the procedures or strategies implemented by the teams to guarantee the attainment of goals. Finally, in the output model, winning the championship represented the most important goal for coaches and players; however, only the head coaches mentioned other goals, such as having successful programs, having their players graduate, and so forth, as important in their football programs. The results identified the factors perceived to influence success of football teams within the Big 12 Conference in Mexico. These findings will be useful to coaches and players of other football teams in Mexico and enable them to implement the strategies and procedures perceived to lead teams to success.

DEDICATION

To my baby

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I would like to thank all the members of my committee. A special thanks is extended to Dr. Michael Sagas for being my graduate advisor, supporting me throughout this program, and being so patient. I also want to thank all of my graduate professors.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
II CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
III METHODOLOGY	19
Participants	19
Procedures	20
Analysis of Data	21
IV RESULTS.....	23
Human Resources.....	24
Economic Resources	24
Material Resources	26
Coaching Experience.....	27
Training	27
Recruiting Programs.....	28
Physical Preparation.....	28
Psychological Preparation/ Motivation	29
Leadership Style	30
Coach- athlete Relationship/ Team Cohesion	30
Successful Football Programs	31
Players to Graduate	32

CHAPTER		Page
	Create Good Citizens/ Individuals	32
	Winning the Championship.....	33
V	DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS ...	35
	Discussion	35
	Summary	36
	Recommendations	38
REFERENCES	40
APPENDIX A	42
VITA	47

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1 Big 12 Conference 2006- teams' standings at the end of regular season, before playoffs.....	8
2 Participants information	20

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1 Input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness	10
2 The conceptual model of coaching efficacy	14
3 Themes emerged from the interviews categorized in the input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness	25

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American football arrived to Mexico in 1927, by direct influence of the United States. It started to be played in Mexico City among young students from universities, and sport clubs showing a great interest for this foreign sport of considerable popularity among American students. Throughout the years, this sport became popular at an amateur level among universities of Mexico. As a result, it was needed to create a football governing body to regulate competition systems, eligibility for players, among other issues concerning college football. For this purpose, the National College Football Organization [ONEFA] was created in 1978. The ONEFA agreed that football programs were to be part of the educational system of universities in Mexico. In addition, the primary purpose was to have the football programs as a complement for academics, and the players treated as regular students. In present days, the ONEFA is composed of approximately 115 teams divided into three categories: Liga Mayor [Major League], Liga Intermedia [Intermediate League], and Liga Juvenil [Youth League]. Each one of these categories is divided into conferences, and particularly the Big 12 Conference of Major League is composed of divisions.

This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Sport Behavior*.

Despite the fact that American football is the most popular sport at college level in Mexico, there are some issues that represent controversies among the people involved in this sport. First, football stadiums have an average capacity of seating 25,000-30,000 fans. Second, there is barely ticket revenue from football games. The average price for a ticket is around \$30 Mexican pesos per person (the equivalent to \$3 usd). There are no concessions; however, people can sell food, drinks, souvenirs, and so forth, at the stadium but there is not contribution of any kind to the football program. Third, media is not committed to college football as it is in the United States. Football games are barely broadcasted; television networks do not pay for the rights of broadcasting games. In fact, they consider doing it as a “favor” to football teams and fans. Finally, football games do not always attract as many people as they would like. For example, the average attendance to a regular game is around 5,000-15,000 fans. Interestingly, classic games-played between the most popular or traditional teams attract more fans to a game: 25,000 fans guaranteed.

However, football programs do offer their students with scholarships, housing, meals, among other benefits. Also, most of the teams have sponsors, and those who do not possess sponsorships are already looking for it. The sponsors basically help the teams with travel expenses and uniforms- they provide a small amount of money, between \$500,000 – \$1,000,000 Mexican pesos (the equivalent to \$50,000- \$100,000 usd.) In return, teams have the sponsor name in their uniforms.

Despite how American football in Mexico is performed, during the last few years the National College Football Organization has displayed significant growth in the level

of competitiveness of their teams. Particularly in the Big XII Conference, differences have been observed in the performance of the teams of public and private schools that compete for the National Championship. The Big XII Conference is divided into three divisions, each of which is composed of 4 teams. The four best teams of the whole nation are placed in the division “Ing. Cayetano Garza”, the division “Jacinto Licea” is composed of four teams considered as being at an average level of competition and, finally, the division “Edwin Arcenau” is composed of four teams that have not been successful, including the team that is promoted to the Big XII after having won the National Conference Championship. The teams are placed in each of the divisions bearing in mind the results obtained on having finished a season, in such a way that the teams may or may not remain in their division for the following season, and the team with the worst record of wins and losses is relegated to the National Conference.

In spite of the fact that this is the principal criterion used to shape the aforementioned divisions, there also exist certain internal factors that can shape a team's success. For example, institutional support, team identification, player coachability (Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney & Butryn, 2002), as well as certain external factors like fan identification, supportive team atmosphere (Giacobbi et al., 2002), mass media, among others outside the level of competitiveness, have managed to be important elements to determine the success or failure of a team. Thus, there are teams considered successful by the fact of having a solid program, and being considered as protagonists by virtue of consistently qualifying for the playoffs, possessing strong institutional and fan support, as well as that from the mass media, etc. Coaches are also involved in such

consideration, since they play an important role in team performance. However, this role can result in a positive or negative influence on players (Schuman, Bester & LeRoux, 2005). According to these authors, successful coaches are characterized by influencing positive behavior; thus, tend to improve coach-athlete relationships.

On the other hand, there are teams that do not possess the same advantages and, consequently, are not successful programs. An important consideration to keep in mind when evaluating the work done within a season is the concept of organizational effectiveness (Chelladurai, 2005). This concept refers to the success of any organization determined by the evaluation of its resources and goals using the input-throughput-output model. Herein, the concept of success is used as a synonym for effectiveness. According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary (2007), success refers to "*an event that accomplishes its intended purpose; an attainment that is successful; a state of prosperity or fame; achiever: a person with a record of successes.*" Chelladurai (2005) suggested that this input-throughput-output model focuses on the resources (inputs) possessed by the organization, the procedures (throughputs), and the goals attained (outputs). To date, no studies could be found that have determined the elements or characteristics that a team must possess in order to be considered successful. The only existing information is often provided by the mass media, based on their perception of a team's performance during a season. For instance, if a team registers a good record of wins and losses, or an undefeated record in a season, they are considered a successful team, whereas a team that registers a bad season is regarded as being unsuccessful. Similarly, if a team that had a good performance in a previous season does not perform

well in the following one it is regarded as being unsuccessful. Conversely, a team that did not perform well in a previous season, but shows an outstanding performance in the following one, is considered to be successful. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence of factors that contribute to the success of a team.

It is for these reasons that this study aimed to investigate the factors or determinants that influence success of a team. The following research questions were developed to meet the purpose of the study:

1. Which factors are perceived to be important in successful teams from the coach's perspective?
2. Which factors are perceived to be important in successful teams from the player's perspective?

The findings of such a study will be useful to other football teams in Mexico, enabling them to implement the strategies and practices of the teams considered the most successful.

Since no research has been done in Mexico concerning football and the factors influencing team success, this study might also attract other researchers to foster a model of successful teams.

This document is organized in five chapters and two appendices. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study, as well as the research questions and the problem statement. Second chapter contains the literature review of the factors associated with sports teams and team success.

Chapter III presents the methods that were used to get the data, the instruments utilized, as well as the analyses of the data. This chapter also describes the qualitative design of this study.

Chapter IV reports the results of the research. The data was obtained from phone interviews with coaches and players of ONEFA's Big XII Conference teams.

Finally, chapter V provides the discussion, a summary of the study, as well as the recommendations. This chapter is followed by one appendix providing the questionnaires used for interviewing head coaches and players.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The teams of the ONEFA's Big XII Conference are widely regarded by the general public as being the best college football teams in Mexico. They are considered to possess programs that have demonstrated positive results after having finished a season. Although this is true for most of them, there is an important consideration to keep in mind when evaluating the work done within a season - to determine if a team achieved all their goals, i.e., the concept of organizational effectiveness. According to Chelladurai (2005), this concept is composed of the definition of effectiveness from an organizational standpoint. Thus, effectiveness represents the accomplishment of goals by an organization (e.g., sport team, athletic department). This represents a major issue among Big XII Conference teams, since winning the national championship is the one common goal. Hence, this might lead to the erroneous conclusion that only one out of twelve teams is effective. However, achieving this goal is not the only element to determine whether they possess organizational effectiveness or not. It is likely that teams set additional goals, such as better performance and self-confidence in players (Shuman et al., 2005), or developing successful athletes (Giacobbi et al., 2002), that if attained, would imply organizational effectiveness. Nevertheless, football teams from public and private schools (see Table 1) differ among themselves in that private schools are characterized by possessing more advantages (e.g., higher income, better recruiting

programs). On the contrary, teams of public schools are more likely to face obstacles in gathering resources that are essential for achieving success.

Table 1. Big 12 Conference 2006- teams' standings at the end of regular season, before playoffs

BIG XII CONFERENCE

Division "Cayetano Garza"

Equipo	JJ	JG	JP	PF	PC	DIF.	PTS.	Ptje.	AVG.
I.T.E.S.M.-C. Estado de Mexico	9	8	1	342	145	197	16	0.889	2.359
I.T.E.S.M.-C. Monterrey	9	8	1	343	104	239	16	0.889	3.298
I.T.E.S.M.-C. Toluca	9	6	3	288	111	177	12	0.667	2.595
Autenticos Tigres U.A.-Nuevo Leon	9	3	6	200	220	-20	6	0.333	0.909
Totales	36	25	11	1173	580	593	50	0.694	9.160

Division "Jacinto Licea"

Equipo	JJ	JG	JP	PF	PC	DIF.	PTS.	Ptje.	AVG.
Aztecas U.D.L.A.-Puebla	9	8	1	309	208	101	16	0.889	1.486
Pumas U.N.A.M.-C.U.	9	5	4	193	206	-13	10	0.556	0.937
Aguilas Blancas I.P.N.	9	5	4	170	148	22	10	0.556	1.149
Aguilas U.A.-Chihuahua	9	1	8	89	269	-180	2	0.111	0.331
Totales	36	19	17	761	831	-70	38	0.528	3.902

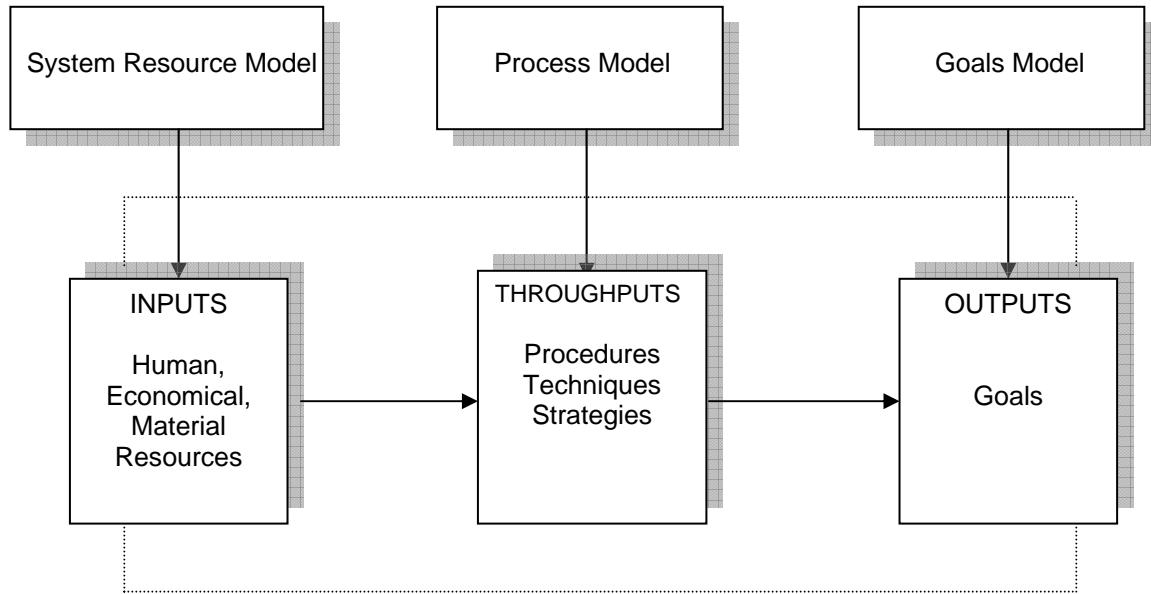
Division "Edwin Arcenau"

Equipo	JJ	JG	JP	PF	PC	DIF.	PTS.	Ptje.	AVG.
I.T.E.S.M.-C. Ciudad de Mexico	9	4	5	169	190	-21	8	0.444	0.889
Linces U.-del Valle de Mexico	9	3	6	86	220	-134	6	0.333	0.391
Frailes U.-Tepeyac	9	3	6	122	179	-57	6	0.333	0.682
Pumas U.N.A.M.-F.E.S.-Acatlan	9	0	9	52	363	-311	0	0.000	0.143
Totales	36	10	26	429	952	-523	20	0.278	2.105

Teams placed in the top division, Cayetano Garza, are perceived to reflect, in a way, greater organizational effectiveness. From those 4 teams, only one, UANL (Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon), belongs to the public educational sector and the rest are campuses run by the same private educational institution. Thus, the ITESM (Instituto Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey) features the best elements and resources that characterize successful programs.

In spite of the criteria used for measuring the performance of the Liga Mayor teams, Chelladurai (2005) states that organizational effectiveness is decisive for all activities in management within any organization, and that five models - goals model system, system resource model, process model, multiple constituency model and competing values approach - are helpful in achieving specific purposes. The establishment of winning the national championship as a primary goal by each of the teams within the Big XII requires the analysis and evaluation of the internal and external factors influencing their work throughout a year. For this purpose, the input-throughput-output model (see Figure 1) is useful for evaluating an organization's resources and goals. The system resource model, or input stage, refers to the acquisition of resources (e.g., human, material, economical) within the same institution or from society for the accomplishment of specific purposes, such as building new facilities, buying new equipment, and so forth. Since these resources contribute to a team's performance, their acquisition is a responsibility of the members involved (e.g., coaching staff, athletic director). According to the system resource model, an organization is effective only if resources are obtained; otherwise it is regarded as ineffective.

Figure 1. Input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness



Thus, in the case of a team seeking donations for restoring the football stadium or tutors for improving the player’s academic performance, this team will be considered effective if it guarantees that the resources (donations and tutors) will be used for achieving its purposes (football stadium restoration and academic performance improvement). Therefore, “the system resource model supposes that the degree to which an organization influences environmental elements and secures necessary resources is a measure of its effectiveness” (Chelladurai, 2005, p.356).

The process model, also called throughput model, involves the internal procedures of an organization for fulfilling its objectives. It represents a link between the

existing resources and the defined goals. Thus, the successful conversion of inputs (resources) into outputs (goals) depends greatly on the process model assumed by an organization (Chelladurai, 2005). For example, the coaching staff could be determined to have the best offensive line of all Conference teams. First, coaches need to seek players (human resources) with specific physical characteristics, such as height, weight, strength, speed, etc. Second, coaches need to design the procedures for finding those players (recruiting). Hence, the recruiting process (process model) is the key for attaining that goal. If good recruitment is conducted, that team will be likely to have the best offensive line. Thus, it can be assumed that the team is effective. Furthermore, the throughput process suggests that many organizations tend to adopt the same processes as those from successful organizations, so they become very similar in executing internal procedures. This suggests that by following the exact same processes an organization will be effective. According to this perspective, a team from Division Edwin Arcenau will be effective if it follows the same processes as those by the teams in Division Cayetano Garza. However, this conclusion may not be completely accurate since there might be teams whose procedures differ considerably from those of successful teams, and still accomplish their purposes effectively.

The goals model, or output model, implies that an organization is effective if it accomplishes its goals. Hence, organizational effectiveness depends on the extent to which the goals established by an organization have been achieved. Two conditions are implicit in this model - the goal must be clear and measurable (Chelladurai, 2005). Although goal-setting is a responsibility of the coaching staff on a football team, some

members within the same institution (i.e., decision makers) may have goal priorities. For example, a football head coach is determined to reinforce players' attitudes and to improve their academic performance at the end of the season. After the season is over, the team showed a losing record, and the athletic department decides to fire the head coach. Thus, it can be deduced that winning games is a priority for other decision-makers regardless of the coach's influence over the players. Hence, if a college football head coach is fired, it is because of the failure in achieving the goal established by decision makers with regard to winning a significant number of games, or as Chelladurai (2005) states "whatever else the coach might have accomplished is irrelevant" (p.351). Although it is thought that major decision makers within an organization will come to a general agreement for establishing goals, some dissension might be present in special cases. This represents a strong instability for any organization since decision-makers tend to change their preferences over goal-setting, as well as to shift their influencing power over decisions. Plus, it is likely that defined goals become unstable over time.

Assuming that the input-throughput-output model serves as a guideline for football teams to conduct organizational processes in a more appropriate way, it is necessary to identify the factors intervening in goal-setting for achieving success.

An important factor relates to coaches. They are perceived to play an important role in team performance. However, this role can result in a positive or negative influence on players. The research conducted by Schuman et al. (2005) suggested that successful coaches – with positive influence - tend to improve coach-athlete relationships. These authors found that successful coaches have the ability to inspire

confidence in their players, deal with different situations, provide accurate feedback to coaching staff and players, and create a good working environment. They also discovered that players' perceptions of successful coaches rely on the activity itself and the players' necessities. In addition, Schuman et al. (2005) proposed that coaches and players are likely to determine which motivational factors (intrinsic factors) are important in their sport.

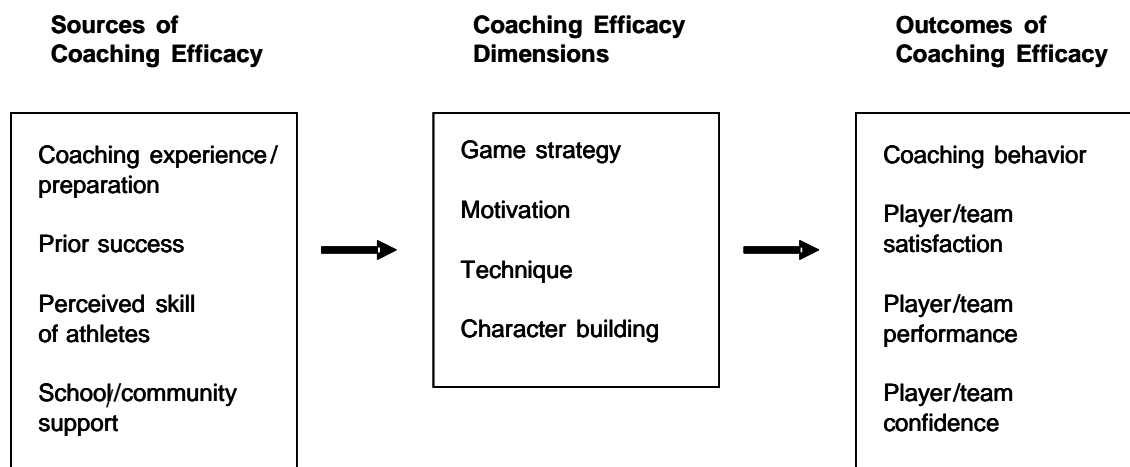
Although motivation *per se* concerns the individual's internal forces for doing any activity, coaches and players tend to differ on their perception of motivation; therefore, they differ in assigning importance to certain motivational factors. For example, a football head coach may be motivated to make his players pursue graduate studies (e.g., a master's degree or PhD) more than having a winning record; whereas the players are motivated towards winning the championship despite the coach's intentions.

According to Schuman et al. (2005), thirteen motivational factors are considered to be of importance in sport: encouragement to perform better; goal setting; enjoyment and pleasure in sport; activation; self-efficacy; communication between coaches/players; reward for achievement; self-confidence in players; praise; individual attention; effective coaching methods and techniques; competition; and being intrinsically motivated. Evaluating these factors within football teams in Mexico may yield a better understanding of the differences among teams within each one of the three divisions in the Big XII Conference.

Another factor of considerable importance attributed to coaching is self-efficacy (Sullivan & Kent, 2003). Research has identified the concept of self-efficacy as an

individual's perceptions of his own capabilities, and the belief in producing results successfully. Further, it suggests that there are different factors (shown in Figure 2) influencing coaching efficacy – these factors represent a conceptual model of coaching efficacy (Sullivan & Kent, 2003).

Figure 2. The conceptual model of coaching efficacy



Thus, the higher the positive results in each of these factors, the higher the efficacy that would be attributed to coaches. When referring to the outcomes of coaching efficiency, leadership style – instruction; democratic; autocratic; social support; positive

feedback –is perceived to be part of coaching behavior (Sullivan & Kent, 2003). This is important to the extent that coaching performed adequately will result in the increase in a player's progress (e.g., skills, self-confidence). If a team does not have a leader, that team is likely to struggle in setting and, therefore, achieving goals. Furthermore, coaching efficiency is supported by the style of leadership that a coach adopts. It is necessary, however, to analyze the different perceptions of leadership among sports coaches. Leadership allows coaches to be more confident when motivating their players, and more efficient in doing their job (Sullivan & Kent, 2003). It is assumed that coaches' leadership style is essential for guiding a team to success. In football teams in Mexico, having a good leader – the head coach - is of considerable importance since players are likely to believe the negative comments of those who are critical towards their programs. Therefore, football teams without a strong leader as head coach may face problems in being considered a successful team.

Successful organizations are characterized for effectively conducting their internal processes – resulting in goal achievement. The adequate execution on these processes pertains to its members, in particular to the head of that organization. Therefore, the leadership process is essential for the “performance of the group and the satisfaction of the members” (Chelladurai, 1980, p.226). In sport, success in teams depends considerably on the decisions taken by the coach. This is significant to the extent that the coach is seen as the leader of the team, thus leader behavior influences whether a team performs well, or not. For most football teams in Mexico the head coach

is identified as the leader, and the coaching staff focuses on the correct execution of the internal processes.

Along with the findings about the characteristics that a coach must possess, research studies suggest that there are some attributes (physical and psychological) necessary for players' success – and therefore for team success (Giacobbi et al., 2002). These attributes are perceived by the coaches to have a positive influence in the internal processes for achieving team goals. This yields to the assumption that highly skilled players significantly contribute to achieving team success. Nonetheless, further investigation is needed to determine whether a player made substantial progress while he or she participated with the team – in such case, it can be concluded that the team is under the parameters of success. Giacobbi et al. (2002) proposed six themes – developmental considerations, motivation/competitiveness, coachability, the coaches' influence, the team's influence, and miscellaneous contextual influences - relative to the physical and psychological attributes of players. In their findings, developmental considerations (i.e., personal characteristics) emerged as the main determinant in players' success.

The themes from this study can be considered helpful in finding the determinants of success within football teams in Mexico.

The literature reviewed suggests that coaching may be the most important element for a team's success – coaching is considered to pertain to the process model stage in the input-throughput-output model for organizational effectiveness. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze the techniques and strategies implemented by coaches

with successful programs. Research suggests that there are certain behaviors present in successful coaches. Lacy and Darst (1985) found eleven categories in which coaching behavior can be evaluated. These categories included the use of first name (i.e., calling a player by his name); praise (i.e., verbal compliments); scold (i.e., statements of displeasure); instruction (i.e., explanation of fundamentals, feedback,) ; hustle (i.e., intensify player's effort); nonverbal punishment (i.e., behaviors of displeasure); nonverbal reward (i.e., nonverbal compliments); positive modeling (i.e., demonstration of correct skill or playing technique); negative modeling (i.e., demonstration of incorrect skill or playing technique); management (i.e., statements of organizational details); other (i.e., any behavior different from the rest of the categories). Their findings also suggested that evaluating each of these categories would be of considerable importance to coaches for their progress. Thus, by being conscious of their behaviors coaches can make the appropriate changes for being more effective – and successful (Lacy & Darst, 1985).

One special element found to determine team success of any organization pertains to team climate and group cohesion (Smith & Smoll, 1997). According to Smith and Smoll, cohesive teams denote commitment to common goals, individual and group effort coordinated effectively, and interpersonal attraction within its members. In sports, as well in other organizations, this characteristic supposes that teams are likely to be successful teams. Because football is a sport that requires every member's participation and effort, cohesion plays a key role in goal attainment. Cohesive football teams are perceived to resist more to obstacles; therefore they are likely to perform better.

Researchers have suggested that teams with high levels of cohesiveness possess “greater group stability, increased role acceptance and conformity to group norms, lowered anxiety, and higher trust and self-esteem scores.” (Smith & Smoll, 1997, p.116). These authors found that team climate and cohesion are essential to players and coaches, since these elements influence their decisions to continue or abandon the program. Plus, team climate and cohesion are perceived to have an effect upon coach-athlete relationships, teammate’s relationships, and overall on the performance of the team, reflected in team effectiveness.

In summary, the literature reviewed for this study showed the different factors influencing team success. It is important to note, however, that such factors represent the findings of studies conducted in United States. Thus, since no research has been done in Mexico concerning the factors stated above, it seemed appropriate to conduct this study to extend this knowledge more broadly. It is expected that the results of this study will provide details of the factors perceived to influence team success within football teams of Mexico.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research studies concerning college sports in United States have demonstrated that there are factors contributing to the success of teams. Findings from such studies can yield to a better understanding of which factors influence success of, and in this study in particular, college football teams of Mexico.

Participants

The subjects for this study included football head coaches and players of teams selected based on their results after season 2006. All of the head coaches had tenure of more than 15 years coaching football. In addition, each participant mentioned to have won numerous and important awards during their career as players or coaches. Thus, four teams were chosen from each division within the Big 12 Conference as of the end of the 2006 season. Telephone interviews were conducted to each of the head coaches and players. The total number of participants was six (n=7), that was four (n=4) football head coaches. To meet the purpose of confidentiality, the participants were given a pseudonym. The names, division, age, and tenure of participants are shown in Table 2.

The basis for team selection was three-fold: (a) level of competitiveness, (b) head coaches perceived as successful, and (c) players with outstanding performance on the field. Thus, the selected participants were perceived to possess the previous characteristics, and therefore represented the best sample to meet the purposes of this study. The head coaches were first contacted by telephone in late April.

Table 2. Participants information

Name	Position	Division	Age	Tenure
John	Head Coach	I	31	8
Bill	Head Coach	I	47	37
Greg	Head Coach	II	83	60
Michael	Head Coach	III	60	34
Dany	Player	I	26	17
Andy	Player	II	24	13
George	Player	I	25	17

The purpose of the phone call was to introduce myself, as well as to explain the purpose of the research study, and solicit their participation. One team in particular solicited a written document stating why their team was chosen, as well as the purpose of the study, and the implications for its institution. This letter was sent via email to the head coach. In addition, head coaches' e-mail addresses were requested to further send a formal invitation to participate in this study.

Procedures

Head football coaches were contacted late April. Phone calls were made to explain to the head coach the purpose of the study. Then I asked only two head coaches to select two, and one player respectively. Subsequently, I asked the head coach to set up an appointment for conducting the interviews. Each team was interviewed on different days. However, the head coach and the players within a team were interviewed on the same day. The telephone interviews were recorded. Two questionnaires were developed based on the factors (i.e. organizational effectiveness; team building and group cohesion;

coaching behavior, and so forth) described on the conceptual framework. The questionnaires addressed different questions for players and head coaches. However, all the participants were first asked to offer their demographic data (i.e., age, gender, marital status, etc.). Subsequently, questions regarding their perceptions of success were addressed (Appendix A). The head coaches were asked more directly about the factors that influence success of teams. For example, questions such as “What resources, human, material or economical, do you consider are essential for achieving team goals?” were addressed to head coaches. On the contrary, the players were asked with their perceptions of the factors that influence success. They were asked with questions like “How do you perceive the strategies, techniques or procedures implemented in your team to guarantee the attainment of goals?”

The duration of the interviews was approximately 40 minutes total for each head coach, and 15 minutes total for each player, giving a total of 205 minutes among all the interviews. The interviews were conducted in a closed room, using special software to record them. Further transcription was conducted. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and afterwards they were translated to English to facilitate the analysis of data.

Analysis of Data

Content analysis was based on Crocker & Algina’s (1986) guidelines. According to this method, “open-ended questions are posed to subjects about the construct of interest, and their responses are sorted into topical categories” (p.68). A coding system was also used to separate the material for this topic from the rest of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The most dominant themes were categorized and framed on the input-

throughput- output model. Subsequently, the findings were compared to the body of existing literature on the topic. A conceptual model from the data was ultimately advanced to better understand organizational effectiveness processes and outcomes of football teams in Mexico.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study attempted to investigate the factors or determinants that influence success of teams within the Big 12 Conference of the National College Football Organization in Mexico. The findings of such a study were perceived to be useful to other football teams in Mexico, enabling them to implement the strategies and practices of the teams considered the most successful.

The participants for this study included 4 head coaches and 3 players ($n= 7$) of teams selected from each division within the Big 12 Conference. All of the head coaches played American football in their youth, and have a coaching tenure greater than 15 years at the college level. All the participants had received numerous and important awards since being involved with American football, either as head coaches or as players, and were well recognized by the ONEFA.

As mentioned earlier in this study, success has been used as a synonym for effectiveness- organizational effectiveness. The participants were asked to provide their personal definition of success. Both the head coaches and players agreed that success implies setting a goal, and go through a series of steps to achieve that goal. Coach Bill from Division I suggested:

Success implies to have an idea, a project, and a goal in mind. Success in football is a consequence of a well-organized-planned work in every aspect of the sport itself.

As previously stated, the participants were asked to provide their perceptions of the factors influencing success of football teams in the Big 12 Conference of the ONEFA. As a result, Figure 3 shows the major themes that emerged from the interview data. These themes were organized into the input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness (Chelladurai, 2005).

Human Resources

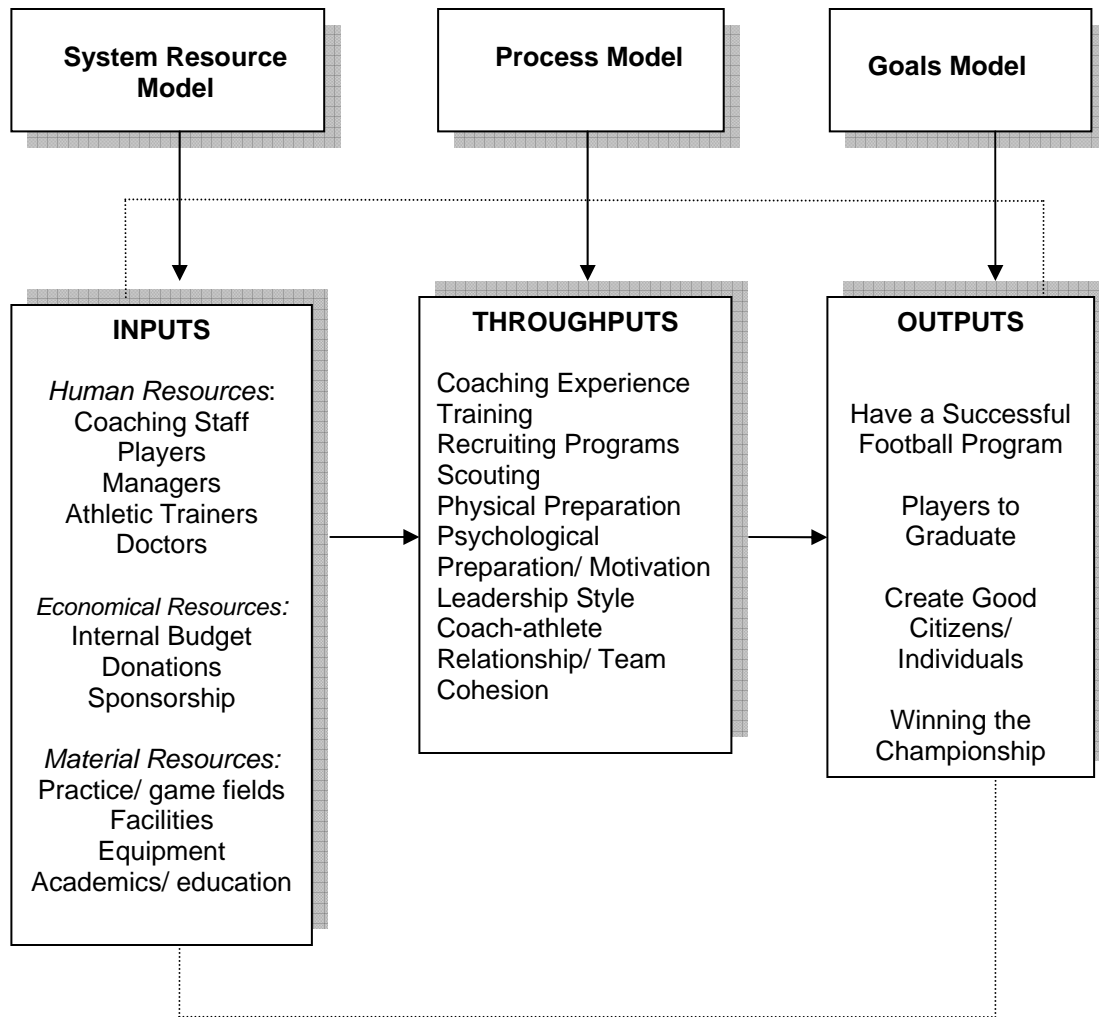
The participants in the present study viewed human resources as the most elemental factor influencing the success of a team. They noted the importance of having a good and well-prepared coaching staff; the necessity of having good recruiting programs, thus having the best players. For example, coach Greg from Division II mentioned that “Human resources are essential, recruiting is also a key element because it allows you to have talented players,” while coach Bill from Division I stated that “The most important element is human resources, they are indispensable. We focus on human talent. Our coaching staff with academic preparation- education.”

Economic Resources

All of the head coaches referred to economic resources as important, but not a determinant for the success of a team. They agreed that not all the teams within the Big 12 Conference possess the same economic resources, but it does not affect the performance of a team. Coach Michael described its importance by saying,

Without economic resources we can't provide our players with the best services. If you have economical resources you can have better human material [coaches, players, and so forth], facilities, equipment.

Figure 3. Themes emerged from the interviews categorized in the input-throughput-output model



While the following statement showed another coach's perception of the importance of economical resources for the success of a team: "Economic resources are

important; obviously, they allow the team to generate an infrastructure that will help you reaching your goals.”

The participants also shared their perceptions on the influence that decision-makers have over the football programs (i.e., institutional support), and how that affects the performance of a team in reaching success. The coaches and players in the present study discussed the role that decision-makers (e.g., institutional authorities), play in supporting the football program.

Decision-makers provide us with economical resources. I don't believe in a football program in which the institution itself don't provide any resources to the team. The football program depends on the institution; it is essential to have the support from our decision-makers.

John, Division I Head Coach

Material Resources

The coaches and players in this sample described academics as the most relevant element for material resources (see Figure 3). Each of the four head coaches stated that academics came first for their players, above playing football. For instance, Coach Greg described academics as a determinant for playing in his team, “The first goal for our players is to be good students, without any drop-outs or failed courses. Then they can be part of this team, and play for us.” Similarly, Dany recognized the importance of academics in order to continue playing for his team, “In this institution, academics come first, then to be good football players. Every player understands that the priority is to be a good student so you can keep playing.”

Interestingly, Michael mentioned that not having a practice field – material resources, affects the performance of the team by saying: “We don't have a practice

field; we don't have a stadium to bring all the community to support our team. You have to borrow other fields and all that really limits our performance on the field.”

As far as the process model is concerned- throughputs, the participants described the main processes or strategies implemented to guarantee the attainment of goals: coaching experience, training, recruiting programs, physical preparation, psychological preparation/ motivation, leadership style, coach-athlete relationship/ team cohesion.

Coaching Experience

Each of the head coaches described the importance of having a well prepared coaching staff committed to their team. They mentioned the type of preparation that a coach must possess for leading the team to success. Coach Bill discussed this type of preparation by saying, “You need to prepare yourself with new techniques. It is very important that each coach is updated with fresh game systems and strategies.” He further suggested “... you need to be internally prepared.” Similarly, coach Greg said “I’ve been involved with football for a long, long time, so I know what this sport is about. Most of us [coaches] played football while we were young.”

Training

Surprisingly, all of the head coaches stated that attending football coaches’ clinics in universities of United States has helped to broaden their knowledge of American football, and to improve their ability for coaching. For instance, Coach John stated the following quote: “I also study and read about football in the United States. Our coaching staff every year attends coaches’ clinics at football programs of United States.

I have good relationships with coaches of different universities.” In addition, coach Greg mentioned that visiting universities in the United States helped to change the concept that they had about American football by saying, “...they [universities] provided us with valuable knowledge, very important information that made us change the concept we had about American football.”

Recruiting Programs

Several coaches claimed that recruiting programs are important for having the best players in their teams; however, coach Bill from Division I stated that there is a difference among teams within each division as far as privileges for recruiting concern. “...there’s no control. Those universities with more prestige and more budget bring the best players to their teams.” He also suggested that:

... this leaves a few chances for other universities to recruit good players since they have to wait to what’s left of players. Big universities have the best players compared to less fortunate universities whom don’t have the same support, budget, facilities, and so.

Similarly, Dany recognized the important role that recruiting plays for his team, as well as the good job that his coaches have been doing in that matter. “Our coaches have been doing a good job in recruiting; they brought in very talented players, and that’s what’s making us win.”

Physical Preparation

The theme of physical preparation was persistent throughout the interviews. All the participants explained the importance of being in good physical shape, as well as having the best strength and conditioning programs for their teams. For example, Andy stated “In football, having a good physical preparation represents your life insurance,” in

the same way, Michael described having an “excellent strength and conditioning program” as part of the characteristics that a team must possess to be regarded as successful. However, several coaches discussed the need for adapting their football programs to the physical characteristics (e.g., height, weight, speed, and so forth) that their players have.

Football is a tough sport that requires certain characteristics such as weight, height, ability, aggressiveness, and so. We don't have tall people, thus we are forced to come up with a totally different program that adapts to our people [players].

Greg, Division I Head Coach

Psychological Preparation/ Motivation

All the participants claimed that psychological preparation and motivation were determinants of good performance of a team. Every coach in this study described the different ways to motivate their players and coaching staff. Interestingly, Coach Bill particularly discussed the difference between individual and group sports' motivation by saying “group motivation is more difficult than individual motivation... Every player thinks different, and thus has a different source of motivation.” This coach also mentioned “I believe that a motivated team can do a lot more things than a well-prepared team without motivation.” Similarly, Coach John stated “We emphasize on the motivational area, either for coaches or players.” Subsequently, George mentioned that “[Our coaches] helped us [the team] to perform well on the field”. Likewise, Dany stated “each one has its own motivators. They [coaches] teach us to create an inner-competition with ourselves, so the only limitation would be ourselves. Motivation and feedback are essential to any team.” In addition, Coach John expressed the following:

We have a program called “motivation through learning”. We help all of our players to reach their goals, either personal or team goals. If we are missing something in the motivational area, we bring specialists to help us enhance a positive mentality in our players and coaches. We watch videos, attend conferences, and even design motivational activities. We work to develop self-motivation in our players.

Leadership Style

There was some disagreement among the participants over the leadership style more appropriate for leading a team to success. However, the majority of the participants thought that a democratic leadership style was the most convenient, and the one that players liked the most. All of the head coaches mentioned that there is a need to have a combination of both leadership styles – autocratic and democratic (Chelladurai, 1980). For instance, coach Bill from Division I expressed the following:

Every coach decides which leadership style suits best to his needs. The modern head coach must have this ability for adapting to any situation, and to create a mix of the different styles of leadership... Sometimes you need to be autocratic; however, sometimes it is good to hear suggestions from your players and coaching staff [democratic].

Subsequently, Andrew said, “Obviously you have to impose discipline and order, but our coach has always been open to hear our point of view about anything.”

Coach-athlete Relationship/ Team Cohesion

All of the participants in this study explained the importance of a good coach-athlete relationship for the success of a team. They also referred to team cohesion as an important complement of the coach-athlete relationship. Coach Greg described this relationship as “vital” for the “final outcome”- success of a team.

I believe that the success of a football program depends greatly on the success of the relationship among coaches and players [athletes]. I think that a successful team is characterized by the good relationship among its members.

Bill, Division I Head Coach

The majority of the participants described their teams as a second family by the fact that they spend more time with them than with their actual families. For example, Andy expressed “I see my team as a family, and I feel that way because I spend more time with them than at home or with my girlfriend.” Similarly, this player also described the role that team cohesion played in his team by saying, “I think it [team cohesion] plays a very important role. You know you need to trust your teammates, and your coaches. I need to trust my family.” In the same way, Coach John simply stated:

There can't be a team without coordination among its members... day by day we work on that aspect [team cohesion] in a way that every coach identifies with his players. The faster we identify with them, the easier the team cohesion among players and coaches.

Finally, for the output model- goals model, the participants were asked to describe team goals important to their football programs. As shown in Figure 3, coaches and players described the goals that they felt important to their teams: have a successful football program, players to graduate, create good citizens/ individuals, winning the championship.

Successful Football Program

The coaches referred to having a successful football program as being the best of all Mexico in every area, not only winning the championship. For instance, Coach Bill particularly described “values”, “good administration”, and “a balance among its resources” as the main characteristics for having a successful football program. He also

suggested that a successful program is the one that has the “ability to establish goals, and the ability to be “organized, and work to reach those goals.” In addition, Coach Greg stated that having an “excellent strength and conditioning program”, “records of improvement”, and “psychological work with players, coaches, and staff members” can help them in fighting to be a successful team in the Big 12 Conference.

Players to Graduate

This goal emerged as the second most important goal to the teams in this study. All of the head coaches established as a goal having their players to graduate from school, to conclude their education. However, the players disagreed over the importance of this goal; instead they considered academics as an important complement during their eligibility as college players. For instance, Coach Bill discussed the importance of concluding education and the reduced possibilities for players to play in professional leagues such as the National Football League in the United States. “Only one or two players from all over Mexico could make it to professional football in the United States. That’s the reason why academics are more important than football *per se*.” He further suggested, “The most important goal for any educational program is education. It’s very important for a football program to increase the number of graduates.”

Create Good Citizens/ Individuals

The majority of the head coaches were concerned about contributing to society by creating good citizens, up righted-virtuous individuals. They described the actions taken in their football programs that would help them in making their players good and respectful individuals. Particularly, Coach John mentioned that all that a football player

learned from the team will help him in the future. “Everything we teach our players will be, somehow, helpful in their [players] next 40 years of life.” This coach also suggested, “We [coaches] need to commit ourselves with our country in creating better citizens, better individuals.” However, Coach Bill offered another perspective that included the values that football develop in players and coaches. “All the values that football help to enhance – loyalty, teamwork, responsibility, are the best knowledge that can be obtained for our players.”

Winning the Championship

All of the participants agreed in that winning the championship was the most important goal to their teams. Although they were encouraged to share other goals important to their teams, all of the participants mentioned the championship as the primary goal. For instance, Dany simply stated, “Winning the championship,” similarly, George said, “First of all, becoming champions.” However, several coaches suggested that winning the championship was not the only indicator of success.

I believe that if a team had a bad season, it doesn’t mean its program is not successful... Even when good results are not obtained on the field, you still achieve other important objectives of equal or even greater value than winning the national championship.

Bill, Division I Head Coach

As an important consideration in this study, the participants were asked to mention if they felt they belonged to a successful team, and the reasons for why they felt so. Interestingly, all of the participants responded affirmative to this question, giving details of the reasons why they felt they belonged to a successful team. For instance, Coach Bill said “The football program of this university is one of the most successful

programs all over Mexico, because we win, and we have a large number of graduates.”

In addition, Coach Greg said: “I consider this team as successful because, despite the fact that we’ve been close to descend to the national conference, we keep fighting, we don’t give up. We keep fighting for the championship.” Subsequently, the players in this study defined their teams as successful by saying, “work ethic, commitment... the head coach is the key element. If we don’t have a good leader, we can’t be a successful team”- Dany; “Last season we had 8 wins-1 loss, and that to me represents success. We are successful because we keep winning season after season”- Andy.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to determine the coaches and players' perceptions of the factors that influence success of teams within the Big 12 Conference of the National College Football Organization [ONEFA] in Mexico.

The themes that emerged from the interview data were categorized in the input-throughput-output model of organizational effectiveness. Chelladurai (2005) defined organizational effectiveness as the success of any organization determined by the evaluation of its resources and goals using the input-throughput-output model.

According to coaches and players in this sample, these themes showed to be of considerable influence for the success of teams. In addition, the participants were asked to provide their personal definition of success. Their responses appeared to be in accordance with the concept of organizational effectiveness.

In this study, human resources emerged as the most important factor for achieving success as part of the system resource model- input model of organizational effectiveness. Moreover, for the throughput model the participants described the processes or strategies (e.g., recruiting, coach-athlete relationships) of relevant importance to be implemented for reaching their goals. Finally, despite the participants revealed other team goals (e.g., having successful programs, create good citizens) the primary goal was winning the championship.

Another interesting result was related to the research question. All of the participants mentioned that they belonged to a successful team, describing the reasons why they felt that way – winning, good administration, and so forth.

In addition, the participants expressed the importance of the support from decision-makers to the football programs, since they provide the team with all the elements necessary for working towards achieving success. All the participants mentioned to have a strong support from the decision-makers (i.e., institutional support) within their institutions. For example, coach Bill from Division I mentioned that, “... They [decision-makers] provide us with the resources we need. Without them we wouldn’t have this football team.” He further mentioned,

Our decision-makers are very happy with the work we’ve done since we started this football team. We became champions of the National Conference in our first appearance in the ONEFA, then we moved up to the Big 12 Conference, and we did a good job. Every since that happened, decision-makers are confident in the work that I [head coach] do with the team.

Such findings reject the statement by Chelladurai (2005), “whatever else the coach might have accomplished is irrelevant” (p.351). However, further investigation is needed to support the idea that despite the fact that decision-makers often come to a general agreement for establishing goals, some dissensions might be present.

Summary

This study was the first to demonstrate the factors that influence success of American football teams in Mexico. The examination of the interview data from the participants showed a variety of the inputs, throughputs, and outputs that a team must consider to achieve success.

In summary, the major findings of the current study revealed that the factors influencing success of teams within the Big 12 Conference of the ONEFA in Mexico were similar to those of college football teams in the United States. The findings were similar in that all of the internal (i.e., motivation, coach-athlete relationships, and so forth), and external (i.e., institutional support, resources, etc.) factors from the literature review were addressed by the participants in this study. For example, literature review suggested that there are some attributes (physical and psychological) necessary for players' success – and therefore for team success (Giacobbi et al., 2002). Subsequently, the findings of the study conducted in Mexico demonstrated that these same attributes are considered to be important for the success of the team. However, they recognized that there is a big difference between football in the United States and that of Mexico in terms of level of competitiveness, administration, and knowledge of the sport. The participants mentioned that football in the United States is very popular at professional and college level, and that players are physically and mentally better prepared. In addition, they mentioned that the infrastructure (e.g., facilities, budget, academics, and so) of American colleges have no comparison to that of colleges in Mexico.

Although the literature reviewed for this study showed the different factors influencing team success, it is important to note, however, that such factors represent the findings of studies conducted in United States.

As previously stated, the findings of this study could be useful to coaches and players of other football teams in Mexico, enabling them to implement the strategies and procedures perceived to lead a team to success.

Recommendations

This study was limited to teams within the Big 12 Conference. Only coaches and players (n=7) were interviewed for this study. However, despite the fact that the Big 12 Conference is considered as the most successful conference of all Mexico, there is a need for extending this research to teams placed in other conferences of the National College Football Organization in Mexico. Thus, the results could be different if more coaches and players of teams from other conferences were included in the sample.

One specific recommendation pertains to the questionnaires used for interviewing the coaches and players in this study. The questionnaires need to be re-formatted so that questions address the specific theme of which more information is desired.

Another recommendation related to the interview schedule refers to encouraging participants to answer according to what was asked in the question. For example, when asking the participants in this study “What objectives other than winning the championship are important to your team?” the majority immediately responded “winning the championship”. Thus, it would be ideal to repeat the questions, and emphasize “other than winning the championship” in order to get the desired responses to meet the purposes of this study.

Additionally, it is important to investigate more in depth the issues that are present in football teams of Mexico. Despite the themes that were perceived to influence success of teams, I argue that there are some factors that prevents the football programs from growing up, and become successful. For example, in my experience as part of the staff of UANL’s football program, I saw and heard about the limitations that most

football teams face. These limitations concern people against the football programs, causing disagreement among players and coaches within a team; thus, affecting the performance of the team. These individuals are likely to make false statements about the team, minimize the coach's work, and not support the team under any circumstances. Also, institutional support represents a big issue for head coaches since most of the institutional authorities are only concerned about winning rather than the goals a coach may establish. As a result, coaches are fired because "they didn't make us win". In addition, some other issues are present in football teams that require special attention by researchers. Some of these issues are: (1) Players are enrolled in school, but sometimes they never show up; (2) Players receive monetary compensation for playing; (3) Members within a team (coaches and players) do things against their football programs; (4) Few teams have total support from its fans, creating a unique relationship among team and community.

In conclusion, it is recommended that future researchers observe the behaviors and structure of the football programs in order to gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the factors affecting or influencing success of American football teams in Mexico.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PLAYERS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEAD COACHES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (PLAYERS)
Success in College Football Teams of Mexico

Demographics

1. Could you, please, tell me your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your marital status?
4. For how long you have been involved with American Football?

Perceptions of success

5. What is your personal definition of success?
6. In your opinion, what characteristics does a team have to possess to be regarded as successful?
7. Do you consider yourself to be on a successful team?
8. Why? Why not?
9. How do you perceive the strategies, techniques or procedures implemented in your team to guarantee the attainment of goals?
10. What do you think about the influence that decision-makers have over the football program?
11. Do you think this has an effect whether to be a successful team or not?
12. Why? Why not?
13. How important is the coach-player relationship to determine the success of a team?
14. What type of leadership in a head coach (autocratic, democratic, and so) do you think is the best for guiding football teams to success?
15. What role do team climate and group cohesion play in you team?
16. Do you believe these elements are essential for the good performance of a team?
17. Which motivational factors do you consider important to the success of a team?

18. What do you think are the differences among teams within each of the three divisions in the Big XII Conference?
19. What goals, other than winning the championship, are important to your team?
20. Do you have any additional comments concerning the success of football teams?

Thank you for your collaboration

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (HEAD COACHES)
Success in College Football Teams of Mexico

Demographics

21. Could you, please, tell me your age?
22. What is your gender?
23. What is your marital status?
24. For how long you have been involved with American Football?

Perceptions of success

25. What is your personal definition of success?
26. In your opinion, what characteristics does a team have to possess to be regarded as successful?
27. Do you consider yourself to be on a successful team?
28. Why? Why not?
29. What resources, either human, material or economical, do you consider are essential for achieving team goals?
30. What strategies, techniques or procedures are implemented in your team to guarantee the attainment of goals?
31. How much influence do decision-makers have over the football program?
32. Do you think this has an effect whether to be a successful team or not?
33. Why? Why not?
34. How important is the coach-player relationship to determine the success of a team?
35. As a head coach, you are perceived to be the leader of your team. How do you prepare yourself to lead you team to success?
36. How do you prepare your players and coaching staff for achieving success?

37. What type of leadership (autocratic, democratic, and so) do you think is more appropriate to guide football teams to success?
38. What role do team climate and group cohesion play in you team?
39. Do you believe these elements are essential for the good performance of a team?
40. Which motivational factors do you consider important to the success of a team?
41. What do you think are the differences among teams within each of the three divisions in the Big XII Conference?
42. What goals, other than winning the championship, are important to your team?
43. Do you have any additional comments concerning the success of football teams?

Thank you for your collaboration

VITA

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Work Experience

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